

**WASHINGTON** — Today, U.S. Sen. John Cornyn, a member of the Senate Republican leadership, and U.S. Rep. Kevin McCarthy, R-Calif., a member of the House Republican leadership and the Ranking Member of the Committee on House Administration's Elections Subcommittee, will reintroduce the Military Voting Protection (MVP) Act, legislation designed to protect the voting rights of our troops serving abroad by ensuring their absentee ballots are delivered back home in time to be counted and do not get lost on the way. Numerous military support organizations and veterans' service organizations supported the MVP Act last Congress.

"In the November 2006 election, the most recent election for which we have official data, just 5.5 percent of eligible military and overseas citizen voters were able to cast a ballot. This is a national disgrace. It is imperative that we put a system in place to ensure our troops serving abroad can participate in the democratic process. It is because of their sacrifice that every American has the right to vote in free and fair elections; the least we can do is guarantee them these same civil rights. The MVP Act is intended to do just that. It would dramatically improve the process for our men and women in uniform to help ensure every one of their votes matters," said Sen. Cornyn.

"Our troops are sacrificing overseas fighting to protect our freedoms, and shouldn't face another round of electoral obstacles greater than any other eligible voters. We know overseas military votes go uncounted, and we know how to help fix the problem. The MVP Act is our opportunity for a bipartisan common-sense solution to protect the votes of our troops and ensure they are counted," said Rep. McCarthy.

## Background

The 2004 and 2006 elections revealed that our troops overseas continue to face substantial roadblocks to their participation in elections back home. According to the Election Assistance Commission, out of the 992,034 military and overseas absentee ballots requested for the 2006 election, more than 660,000 never reached election officials to be counted. Of the ballots that did reach election officials, many were rejected for various reasons, including 10 percent of those having been received too late to be counted. Though the official data from the 2008 election is not yet available, the preliminary evidence indicates that our military voters faced the same array of problems in trying to cast their ballots.

The MVP Act attempts to reduce delays in the absentee voting system currently in place for our overseas troops, who have little control over their geographic assignments. The bill would provide for the express shipping of their completed absentee ballots, with tracking of these ballots while in transit. The aim of the bill is to ensure that the ballots of these troops overseas are delivered to the appropriate state election officials by the jurisdiction's statutory deadline, while safeguarding voter privacy and ballot secrecy.

Both Sen. Cornyn and Rep. Kevin McCarthy introduced closely related measures last Congress. The Senate unanimously passed the MVP Act in October 2008, but it was never considered by the House.

Last August, Sen. Cornyn, joined by 34 other members of Congress, sent a [letter](#) to then-Attorney General Mukasey regarding the Defense Department's poor track record during recent elections in meeting its obligations under federal law to assist military voters, as evidenced by the following:

- Participation rates among military and overseas voters in the November 2006 election were excessively low.
- Only 16.5 percent of the six million eligible military and overseas voters requested an absentee ballot for the November 2006 election. Out of those military and overseas voters, only one-third of their completed ballots actually reached election officials.
- Only 59 percent of surveyed military service members knew where to obtain voting information on base – and only 40 percent had received voting information or assistance from a Voting Assistance Officer.

For more information, please contact the Committee press office at (202) 225-8281